

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<u>Project Name:</u> Pehan Land Breaking	<u>Proposed Implementation Date:</u> Summer 2014
<u>Proponent:</u> Robert Pehan, P.O. Box 375, Opheim, MT 59250	
<u>Type and Purpose of Action:</u> Robert Pehan requested to break 91.47 acres of expiring CRP land on State lease #4559. The current CRP contract expired on September 30 th , 2013. After haying the acres in 2014, the lessee would prepare to break half of the acres (approx 45.81 acres) to seed to small grains in 2015. In 2016, the lessee would break the other half of the acres (approximately 45.66 acres).	
<u>Location:</u> NE4 of Sec. 36 - Twp. 37N - Rng. 41E	<u>County:</u> Valley County, MT

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	The proponent, Robert Pehan, contacted The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) and requested to break the referenced State land. The request will be reviewed per DNRC land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod. MT FWP was solicited for comment on December 18 th , 2013. Drew Henry from MT FWP responded with comment on December 31 st , 2013. NRCS and FSA will be involved.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant the proponent permission to break 91.47 acres of former CRP for use in small grain production. No Action Alternative: Deny the proponent permission to break 91.47 acres of former CRP for use in small grain production.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS
	N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	Soils are primarily Farnuf loam, Turner loam, and Phillips-Scobey complex. These soils are class IIIe soils and suitable for farming. The three soil types meet all of the DNRC's breaking criteria for lands other than native sod. Removing the permanent cover would make the soil more susceptible to erosion; however, the cropping methods used by our lessee

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	<p>should ensure erosion does not become a problem. No unusual geologic features or fragile, compactable, or unstable soils are present on the land to be broke. There may be areas of the tract that would be flagged by DNRC personnel and left in permanent vegetative cover if necessary.</p> <p>Action: Removing the permanent vegetation may increase the likelihood of erosion, but erosion is not anticipated to increase with proper farming techniques. No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated. Lessee would be required to reseed all eroding areas to permanent cover if erosion becomes a problem in the future.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</p>
5.WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	<p>Small grain crop production would utilize the soil's available water similar to the CRP stand that is present.</p> <p>Action: The project is not anticipated to impact the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface water.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</p>
6.AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	<p>Action: No impacts to air quality are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to air quality will occur.</p>
7.VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any plant species of concern or potential concern. The present CRP stand of western wheatgrass, smooth brome, and alfalfa would be broken up and small grain crops would be annually planted and harvested.</p> <p>Action: Vegetation cover would be altered from CRP western wheatgrass, smooth brome, and alfalfa vegetation to annually seeded cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present in the current stand of vegetation.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p>
8.TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified two species of concern, and one potential species of concern in the area of this land breaking. The database lists the Iowa Darter as a species of concern and the Brook Stickleback as a potential species of concern. These species are fish species and no impacts to their preferred environments are anticipated. The other species of concern is the Western Hog-nosed Snake. The Western Hog-nosed Snake</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

has an apparent preference for arid areas, farmlands, and floodplains, particularly those with gravelly or sandy soil. The current CRP is likely used at times for nesting habitat and feed by bird species and as a bedding, resting, hiding, and feeding area for the area's mammal wildlife. Removing the CRP would displace the animals into the surrounding landscape. The annual production of small grains would provide some cover and provide a food source to the area.

The response from Drew Henry from MT FWP included the following: "When viewing the National Wetland Inventory on an aerial overfly, it appears that at least one wetland, or backwater, in association with Roanwood Creek, may be located on this site. MFWP would recommend further field evaluation of this site, as it is likely that it would be consistently too wet to farm, and would be more useful to be left in wildlife habitat. If this is the case, MFWP would recommend that this area be left in permanent vegetation with a 100 meter buffer to benefit reptile and amphibian use, upland game bird nesting cover, as well as for filtering pollutant runoff and limiting top soil erosion." These comments will be taken into consideration, and if need be, areas on the tract will be flagged off from breaking and left in permanent vegetation.

Action: If necessary, areas on the tract would be flagged off from breaking. No substantial impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified two species of concern, and one potential species of concern in the area of this land breaking. The database lists the Iowa Darter as a species of concern and the Brook Stickleback as a potential species of concern. These species are fish species and no impacts to their preferred environments are anticipated. The other species of concern is the Western Hog-nosed Snake. The Western Hog-nosed Snake has an apparent preference for arid areas, farmlands, and floodplains, particularly those with gravelly or sandy soil. No plant species of concern or wetlands are present within the project area.

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10.HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	<p>An onsite inspection by Matt Poole, Unit Manager, GUO, DNRC did not reveal any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources.</p> <p>Action: The acreage proposed to be broken has been disturbed in the past and does not contain on record any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p>
11.AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	<p>The project area currently consists of a mixture of grazing lands, agricultural lands, and CRP lands. This project area is not near a prominent topographic feature, no excessive noise or light would be produced, and it is not visible from a populated or scenic area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.</p>
12.DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	<p>Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.</p>
13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects	<p>Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

on this tract?

No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE

[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?

Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?

Action: No impacts to industrial and commercial activities are anticipated. Returning this acreage to agricultural production would result in increased small grain production.

No Action: No impacts to the industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities and production will occur.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.

Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?

Action: The proposed action may increase tax revenue from the increased revenues generated via the lease being returned to production.

No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?

Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services will occur.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?

Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?

The acreage proposed to be broke provides habitat for recreational hunting of mostly upland bird and white-tailed deer.

Action: Hunting opportunities for upland game birds and deer may be impacted. No other impacts to recreational or wilderness activities are anticipated.

No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND

Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution

HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	of population and housing are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles will occur.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Marc Kloker\s
Marc Kloker (Land Use Specialist)

Date: January 3, 2014

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts are anticipated.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:	
<input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: January 3, 2014
Signature